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TAGS: SNAR PREL JM

SUBJECT: JAMAICA:: IMPLOSION AT FINANCIAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION LEAVES CONTINUED U.S. SUPPORT IN QUESTION

Classified By: Charge JAMES T. Heg, for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In early April, when the NAS Director was absent from Post, the Government of Jamaica removed the Director, Deputy Director, and key investigative staff from the Financial Investigative Division (FID). The reason given for the decision was that the &international community had lost confidence in the staff.<sup>8</sup> Neither the U.S., UK, nor Canada, Jamaica's main partners, had expressed anything other than concern about some management issues. The new Director's background is in taxation, and there are concerns about her relationship with a suspected corrupt police officer. For the moment, Canada will not work with her. The U.S. and UK law enforcement organizations are reserving judgment until she is vetted. End Summary

Oversight problems put Director and Deputy at risk.

¶2. (SBU) In September 2007, the police estimate that USD 200,000 went missing from the evidence vaults at FID. Two members of staff, a Jamaica Constabulary Force Officer and a civilian investigator, are the prime suspects. Poor management of the vault's keys, a lack of security cameras, and an inexplicable absence of any sort of standard accounting of the vault's inventory made it particularly susceptible to theft. In addition to their misfeasance through poor oversight, the Director of the FID, Christine Chambers, and her Deputy, Alwyn Herriman, botched the post-discovery investigation as they to conduct a parallel investigation once the police were involved, withheld information that they gleaned from the Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of the investigation, and failed to secure the vault properly once the discovery was made. The straw that broke the camels back was when the vault again was left open and it came to light that, in direct contravention of a Ministry directive, the keys for the vault remained unsecured and the FID continued to keep cash in the vault. (Note: In addition to Chambers and Herriman, the Ministry of Finance also removed Mr. Farr, one of FID's senior investigators.)

Sr. Advisor to Minister of Finance engineered the collapse

¶3. (SBU) The Director and her Deputy's inattention to oversight provided Senior Advisor to the Minister of Finance Col. Trevor MacMillan the excuse he needed to recommend that the government pull the plug and remove them. Previously MacMillan had expressed a dislike for the FID and Chambers because when it had been created it had absorbed the Revenue Protection Division, an organization MacMillan used to head.

Progress on investigation into the missing funds

¶4. (SBU) On May 2, the Assistant Commissioner of Police for Major Crimes, Les Green, informed the NAS Director that the investigation into the funds missing from FID continues. Green however, does not believe that the money will be recovered or the perpetrators prosecuted. Green believes that one police officer and one member of the civilian investigative staff were involved. However, because the crime scene was not secured, he must rely on witness statements. He has a witness, but she won't testify out of fear for her life. Green faults Ms. Chambers for her misfeasance through a lack of proper oversight but does not suspect her of direct involvement in the theft. However, he does suspect Alwyn Herriman. According to Green, there are too many fingers pointing at Herriman for his liking, and he would not trust Herriman without a full vetting, to include a polygraph.

¶5. (SBU) The Kingston based RCMP Liason officers dispute Green's claim of Herriman's culpability. Staff members from SOCA at the UK High Commission are also dismissive of any notion that Herriman may have been involved. Both Herriman and Chambers were highly regarded and trusted by Jamaica's international partners.

New FID Director

¶6. (SBU) On May 5, the NAS Director met with the new Director of FID, Sharon Crooks to discuss her vision of the future of the organization. Ms. Crooks comes to the FID from the Tax Authority. Her last position there was as an Advisor to the Director General. Although Ms. Crooks reports to both the

Minister of National Security and the Minister of Finance, the locus of decision making regarding this critical partner organization clearly has moved to the Ministry of Finance due not only to Crook's tax background, but also because the continued absence of National Security Minister Derrick Smith will only heighten the FID's disconnect from National Security. Indeed the Ministry staff is so worried about this situation that National Security's Permanent Secretary has asked the NAS to arrange a strategy session with him and his Sr. Advisor for Policy to discuss the future of the FID.

¶7. (C) Crooks, who has not been vetted, is going to have a difficult time winning the confidence of her international partners. The manner in which Chambers and Herriman were dismissed and Crooks appointed has angered both the Canadian and UK Law Enforcement Community. On May 1, the head of Canada's RCMP Liaison office told the NAS Director that due to his concerns about a rumored relationship between Crooks and a suspected corrupt police officer, Sr. Superintendent Devon Watkiss, Canada was ceasing to cooperate with FID on cases. A representative from the UK's Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) also expressed fury over Chambers and Herriman's dismissal and misgivings about Crooks, but did not state outright that the UK would cease cooperation. On the U.S. side, for the moment, the ICE Attaché will continue to cooperate with FID on active cases; he has chosen to take a wait and see approach to the agency.

Crooks has promised to push passage of FID Act

¶8. (SBU) Despite her tax background, Crooks informed the NAS Director that she does not intend to chase tax fraud; the FID will remain a financial investigative agency. Her intention is to try to fill yawning staffing gaps in the organization, which suffers from a lack of qualified investigators and managers, and to streamline case management. According to Crooks, there has not been good case management in the past; as an example, she showed the NAS director a large stack of pending cases from ICE that she is trying to delve into. Crooks also shared with the NAS Director the reports she received from the staff during her in-brief. According to Crooks it has been very frustrating, as many of the questions she poses to her staff meet with the response to &ask Ms. Chambers or Mr. Herriman.<sup>8</sup> Due to a lack of confidence in the staff, both Chambers and Herriman were personally

involved in investigations, which may have contributed to the lack of management oversight at the organization.

¶ 9. (SBU) Crooks acknowledged that the FID as it exists now does not stand on firm legal footing. She agreed with the NAS Director on the need to push for passage of the FID Act, which is the legislation necessary to authorize the organization as Jamaica's internationally recognized Financial Investigative Unit and clarify its role in financial investigations. This legislation has been awaiting parliamentary action for more than one year, and passage and implementation would enable Jamaica to join the Egmont group of nations.

¶ 10. (SBU) Crooks discussed her misgivings about the trustworthiness of some members of staff and said that on the same day she intended to dismiss two additional staff members who have failed an internal background check. Crook also stated that it is her intention to vet all members of staff, to include polygraphing: &if they fail, they go home.<sup>8</sup> When the NAS Director pointed out to Crooks that she had not been vetted prior to her assignment as FID Director, Crooks agreed to undergo the same vetting as her staff. Crooks stated that it is a question of leadership: if she isn't willing to be tested how she can ask her staff to submit to vetting?

#### NAS Support now in question

¶ 11. (SBU) In 2007, the FID took delivery of US 75,000 in NAS-funded computer equipment as part of a five stage reform plan that was being jointly funded by the U.S., UK, and Canada. The fall of 2007 also saw the commencement of a one-year training program by the UK's Asset Recovery Agency to bring FID staff up to snuff on the management of civil forfeiture investigations, seizures, and forfeiture cases. With the hand over to Crooks, given the misgivings of our international partners, the continuation of that support could be in question. The NAS Director told Crooks that she is going to have to prove that the FID will remain a reliable partner if it wants continued international support. We are in discussions with our Canadian and British counterparts as to how we can properly vet Crooks and find common ground on a joint policy to govern any future relationship with the FID.

¶ 12. (C) Comment: Chambers and Herriman were well liked, and in the past had proven to be trustworthy partners. The U.S., UK and Canada have invested a good deal of time, talent and resources in Chambers and Herriman. The visceral anger expressed by our Canadian and UK colleagues about the dismissals at FID may have more to do with their dislike of Col. MacMillan, and their abused sensitivities at the ham-handed method used by the Ministry of Finance than an actual problem with Crooks. Clearly there were management and oversight failures at FID, and a change in leadership was warranted; whether it needed to sweep up Herriman and Farr is an open question. The RCMP's accusations of collusion with Watkiss however are troubling. Crooks said all the right things in the meeting with the NAS Director, and she seemed to have a grasp of the organizational challenges facing FID. It remains to be seen if the FID under Crooks will remain a trusted partner worthy of continued U.S. support. End Comment.  
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